

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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IT MIGHT BE TIME TO CIRCLE THE WAGONS

By Bill Bunger

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The winter of 2000-01 had a tremendous impact on wildlife. Snow began piling up in December and cold weather hung on for months. If recent weather patterns continue for a few more weeks, our current winter could be somewhat reminiscent of 2000-01. The issues that came about in 2000-01 was deer herds feeding on unprotected stored food sources, and we could be facing the same issue again this year.

This year, snow depths continue to increase in western Iowa and temperatures are remaining quite cold. Add in the drought conditions from last summer and fall, and we may see some deer moving to whatever food is available above the snow line. The drought conditions may have reduced the amount of palatable woody forage and other herbaceous browse this winter further encouraging deer to seek other food sources. If we don't see a break it might be time to examine where your crop is stored.

Any harvested crop if left out in the open could be a target for a wintering deer herd. Installing a fence around crops stored in a consolidated location can be effective. A 6 to 8 foot tall plastic fence with 2-inch by 2-inch or smaller mesh can be erected around an area or wrapped around a harvested crop without much expense or trouble. The smaller mesh keeps noses from reaching through and if snow can be kept from piling to high against the fence, the height is adequate to keep deer out. Any form of physical barrier is better than nothing at all.

Something else to consider is that wildlife may be easier to deter in an occupied setting, in other words closer to home, where there is a constant presence of people. People who are regularly harassing animals in order to protect a crop is even better. The use of cracker shells or blanks shot from a gun can be a deterrent. A dog kept near the area can also help keep wildlife away. Some sort of negative reinforcement is may become necessary. The picture of a boy with a loaded and drawn slingshot comes to mind. Certain species of wildlife species in Iowa have shown a high level of tolerance for people if people are too tolerant of them. Keeping a little bit of the wild in any wildlife species is a good thing.

Hopefully we'll see a break in the snow, temperatures will moderate, some bare ground will show up and the winter of 2000-01 will remain a bad memory. Otherwise, it might be time to think about circling the wagons.

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FORESTED RIPARIAN BUFFERS IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AND PROFIT LANDOWNERS

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is aiming to improve Iowa's water quality through the planting of riparian buffers. Riparian buffer is a fancy name for strips of trees and grasses along streams.

Throughout Iowa, natural buffers of grasses and trees that would normally filter water flowing into streams have been removed to create additional cropland. Farming next to the stream creates a direct route for pollutants to reach streams and rivers. Riparian buffers put natural vegetation back on the landscape to filter out soil sediment, fertilizer, manure and herbicides. Planting trees and shrubs also improves Iowa's wildlife habitat and natural beauty.

The riparian buffer practice involves planting trees and grasses on an area 180 feet wide along each side of the stream bank. Buffers planted on cropland must contain a minimum of 60 feet of trees or shrubs. The other 120 feet could be planted to native grasses. The entire buffer could be trees and shrubs if desired. Buffers on marginal pastureland must be a minimum of 160 feet trees and shrubs.

"Water quality and wildlife are big winners in this program; however, landowners can also win by using buffers to increase their income," said Paul Tauke, forestry supervisor for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The program will reimburse landowners ninety percent of their planting costs.

Landowners can also receive a \$150 per acre sign up bonus and an annual rental payment for 15 years. If the buffer is on pasture, the payment will be \$84 per acre annually. If the buffer is on cropland the rental rate will depend on the average soil rental rates for the soil type on which the buffer is planted. The NRCS office can determine the soil rental rate.

The riparian buffer program is a continuous sign-up practice. Landowners can apply anytime at their county Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. Any crop or pasture land adjacent to a creek, stream or river qualifies for the program.

For more information on forested riparian buffers go to www.iowatreeplanting.com , or contact Forestry Supervisor, Paul Tauke at 515/242-6898 or paul.tauke@dnr.state.ia.us .

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DEADLINE TO REMOVE PERMANENT ICE HOUSES EXTENDED

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is extending the deadline that permanent ice fishing houses can remain on the ice from Feb. 20 to March 1. The extension is due to favorable ice conditions across much of the state. The deadline to remove permanent ice fishing houses from public lakes.

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FINAL WEEK TO FISH FOR WALLEYE, PIKE AND MUSKIES ON IOWA GREAT LAKES

SPIRIT LAKE – Walleye and northern pike season on lakes West Okoboji, East Okoboji and Spirit closes Feb. 15 and reopens on May 1. Muskellunge season in those lakes closes Feb. 15 and reopens May 21.

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SPECIAL LIGHT GEESE SPRING CONSERVATION SEASON IS UNDERWAY

DES MOINES – The spring hunting season on light geese, which includes white and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese, is open and runs through April 15. This is a

special U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conservation order that allows for a spring snow goose hunting season

Hunters are required to have a valid 2004 hunting license, pay the habitat fee and the state migratory game bird fee. The federal duck stamp is not required. Hunters must use non-toxic shot.

The daily shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset. Hunters are not required to have their waterfowl plugs in their guns and they may use electronic calls. The daily bag limit is 20 birds with no possession limit.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of February 10, 2004

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Ice conditions continue to vary greatly across the state.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): CAUTION! The snow is deep and many people are getting stuck when trying to get on the lake. Walleye anglers are fishing way out from Marble Beach and along Reeds Run on the east side of the lake. They are sorting through smaller fish. Some walleye anglers are fishing the north end by Crandall's Beach, Big Stoney Point and Mini-Wakan State Park. Anglers are using jigging raps, kastmasters and other lures tipped with minnow, minnow heads or perch eyes, when available. Yellow perch fishing has been kind of slow with some perch being caught on the east side of the lake, on both sides of Big Stoney Point and off Crandall's Beach. Use pilkees or jigs tipped with minnows or wigglers. Crappie fishing is good out from Angler's Bay Resort. Use wax worms and smaller jigs. Some anglers are using minnows. Some bluegills are being caught in the same area as the crappies. Use wax worms and smaller jigs.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): CAUTION! There is open water near the Gull Point area and the north end. Anglers are still catching bluegills and crappies in Miller's Bay in 10 to 12 feet of water. A few are being caught in Smith's Bay fishing close to shore. Try fishing Pocahontas Point for bluegills. A few northern pike are being caught at Smith's, Miller's and Emerson bays, and at the north end, using chubs. Yellow perch are being caught between Gull Point and Eagle Point at Spencer Beach in 10 to 12 feet of water.

Arrowhead Lake (Sac): Bluegill fishing is fair to good throughout the lake. Some sorting is required for larger fish.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Snow is deep on lakes in the area and not many people are out fishing. A few yellow bass and crappies are being caught.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Yellow bass fishing has slowed. Fish in the area by the Island and Billy's Reef around sunset. Use minnows and jigging spoons for the best action.

Rice Lake (Winnebago/Worth): Yellow perch are hitting minnows and small jigs. Many of the perch are small, so sorting is required. A few northern pike in the 2 to 5-pound range are being caught while perch fishing.

Silver Lake (Worth): Yellow perch fishing is fair. Use small minnows and jigs. Sorting is required for larger fish.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at (712) 336-1840.

Southwest

In southwest Iowa there is heavy snow cover on all lakes and ponds. Recent snowstorms have slowed fishing activity throughout southwest and central Iowa. Anglers are cautioned that although most lakes have reported good ice, these conditions can change and to check the ice frequently.

Big Creek (Polk): Bluegill fishing is fair to good during the day using teardrops and wax worms in the Lost Lake area near the spillway. Crappie fishing has been good late in the day in the Lost Lake area and in the main lake in deeper water using rocker jigs and minnows. Crappies have been from 8 to 14 inches.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill and crappie fishing is slow to fair. A few channel catfish have been reported.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair to good. Try jigs over habitat in the north part of the lake.

Don Williams (Boone): Crappie fishing has been good. A good area to try is along the eastern part of the lake in the afternoon. Bluegill fishing is fair to good with jigs and wax worms.

Hickory Grove (Story): Bluegill fishing has picked up and anglers are reporting some fair to good fishing.

Viking (Montgomery): Ice thickness varies from 6 to 9 inches. Anglers are catching bluegills and yellow bass, with better toward evening.

Greenfield (Adair): Ice thickness varies from 5 to 7 inches. There are 3 areas of open water: at end of fishing jetty north of boat ramp, the boat ramp, and around northeast shoreline. Use caution and check ice thickness and conditions often, avoid areas near open water. Anglers were catching 6 to 8 inch bluegills.

Mormon Trail (Adair): Ice thickness varies from 5 to 7 inches. Use caution; check ice thickness and conditions often. Anglers were catching 7 to 9 inch bluegills, but sorting out smaller fish.

Willow Lake (Harrison): Ice thickness is 8 inches. Anglers are catching a few bluegills, with better fishing toward evening.

Farm Creek Lake (Montgomery): Ice thickness varies from 6 to 8 inches. Fishing is excellent for bluegills.

Anderson Area North Pond (Montgomery): There is 8 inches of ice. Fishing is good for bluegills in front of the dam.

DeSoto Bend (Harrison): Ice varies from 3 to 8 inches. Anglers are catching crappies and bluegills around structure at the south end of the lake.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Anglers are catching catfish, small bluegills and crappies around brush piles. Ice thickness varies from 3 to 7 inches.

Three Mile (Union): Ice varies from 8 to 12 inches. Fishing is good for bluegill and crappies in the upper end. Walleye fishing is good on the rock piles on old roadbed.

Twelve Mile (Union): Fishing is good for walleyes and crappies.

Green Valley (Union): Ice thickness varies from 6 to 10 inches. Some bluegill and crappies are being caught.

Badger Creek (Madison): Fishing is good for bluegills.

Criss Cove (Madison) and the smaller county board areas are good for crappie and bluegill.

Icaria (Adams): Anglers are catching channel catfish.

Fogle (Ringgold): Good ice and good fishing for lots of bluegills and crappies. Some channel catfish can be caught.

Slip Bluff (Decatur), **Windmill** (Taylor) and **Wilson** (Taylor) all have good fishing for bluegill and crappie. Ice thickness varies from 7 to 12 inches.

Walnut Creek Marsh (Ringgold): Fishing is good for bluegill and some crappies.

Little River (Decatur): Fishing is good for bluegill and crappies.

Farm ponds: Fishing is best on ponds. Note: anglers need permission to fish on private ponds. Best fishing is for bluegill with some crappie in the larger ponds. Ice conditions are generally good. Ice thickness varies from 3 to 8 inches.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, contact the regional office in Lewis at (712) 769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: Solid ice conditions continue on most backwater areas of the Mississippi, but fishing is slow. Anglers are reporting slow to fair fishing for bluegills with a lot of sorting of smaller fish and slow to fair fishing success for crappie in **Big Timber** and **Bell's Pocket**.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): A few bluegills are still being caught in Sand Run along the fallen trees. Use a wax worm fished one to two feet off the bottom.

Lake Geode (Henry): Good ice conditions despite the geese keeping some of the lake open. A few anglers are catching bluegills around the brush piles in the bays and along the creek channel in the upper end of the lake.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): Bluegill fishing is fair along the creek channel in the trees. Be careful, there are several bad spots in the ice since the lake is coming up and the creek channel is one of the worst areas. Drill several test holes as you go along.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies continue to bite on minnows and jigging baits. Fishing has been best in areas with underwater habitat such as cedar trees or pallet structures. Anglers fishing the area around Honey Creek State Park boat ramp and Southfork have had the best luck.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Crappies and bluegills have been hitting on jigs tipped with a wax worm. There is still an area of open water east of the beach so use caution. Most fishing has been occurring around the habitat buoy out from the fishing pier on the northeast side of the lake.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Bluegills, and an occasional crappie, have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a wax worm. Fishing has slowed down lately, but the most productive times have been mornings and evenings.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Bluegills have been hitting on teardrop jigs tipped with a wax worm. An occasional walleye or crappie has been caught using minnows or jigging lures.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Fishing continues to be slow for crappies. Anglers have caught crappie throughout the reservoir around the rock walls and brush piles

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Anglers should be aware of poor ice conditions near the dam, in front of the North Shore boat ramp off Opie Ave., and the Causeway Bridge area on the South Arm. Fishing has been slow to fair with the best fishing in the early morning and just before and after dark for crappies around brush piles. Some decent bluegills have been caught, although sorting is required for sizeable fish.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): Fishing continues to be fair for perch, bluegills and a few catfish around the dam. Anglers have caught a few bluegills and crappie west of the power lines, but some sorting is required for sizeable fish.

Hannen Lake (Benton): Bluegill fishing has been fair on jigs tipped with wax worms. Some sorting is required for sizeable fish with best fishing in the morning and evening hours. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Fishing has been fair for crappie and bluegill around brush piles using jigs tipped with wax worms. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited.

Farm Ponds: Fishing has been fair for bluegills on jigs tipped with wax worms.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at (319) 694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Fishing has slowed greatly in Pools 12 to 15. At Pool 12, fishing has slowed way down. In Pool 13, anglers are catching bluegills and crappies at **Middle Sabula Lake**, but sorting is required. **Browns Lake, Green Island,** and **Lower Sabula Lake** have all slowed down. **Rock Creek**, on Pool 14, has slowed down as well.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at (563) 927-3276.

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